

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2011

SPEECH OF

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 27, 2010

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 5136) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2011 for military activities of the Department of Defense, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes:

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Chair, I rise in strong opposition to the National Defense Authorization Act of 2011. This legislation authorizes \$725.9 billion for defense programs this year, including \$159.3 billion specifically for the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the so-called "war on terror." Once again, the House of Representatives easily approves billions of dollars for war, while a bill that would provide genuine assistance to our constituents gets watered down by the demagoguery of fiscal responsibility.

Our national security is not preserved or furthered through the military occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan. Our presence in the region continues to foment resentment toward us and undermines the human rights of the Iraqi and Afghani people. To date, more than 4,000 U.S. servicemembers have lost their lives in Iraq, and more than 31,000 have been wounded. As the number of troops in Afghanistan surpasses the number in Iraq, over one thousand U.S. troops have been killed thus far. With the continuation of the wars, we are creating a new generation of Americans that will experience the trauma of war, like Vietnam veterans before them.

According to the United Nations, air strikes continue to be the leading cause of civilian deaths in Afghanistan, despite the Administration's claims that avoiding civilian casualties is a cornerstone of the Afghan strategy. Innocent Afghans are killed, detained or threatened in frequent night raids conducted by North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces, while Afghan President Hamid Karzai buys million-dollar villas in Dubai. This bill also authorizes \$4.9 billion for ammunition and weapons systems, including for Unmanned Aerial Vehicles—or drones—that conduct indiscriminate attacks against suspected militants in Pakistan. According to a study conducted by the New America Foundation, three civilians die for every suspected militant killed by a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) drone in Pakistan.

I am also concerned about a number of the amendments adopted in the bill that I believe have no place in a bill that is intended to address our national security. Language addressing sex-offenders and language that has considerable implications on our foreign policy was included as part of an en bloc amendment that addressed a significant gap in the health care services provided to our veterans pre and post-deployment. An amendment was also adopted that would allow the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to conduct defense-related pilot programs with the Department of Defense (DOD). I have fought for years to keep NASA separate from DOD in order to preserve NASA's mission integrity and therefore, longevity.

While I oppose the underlying bill, I supported an amendment that would lead to the repeal of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT) military policy. For the past 17 years, DADT has forced our service men and women to hide who they are as they selflessly sacrificed their lives for our country. The amendment would repeal DADT following the receipt of recommendations from a Pentagon working group tasked with formulating the implementation of the repeal and certification from the President and Secretary of Defense that the Department of Defense is prepared to implement its repeal.

Since the implementation of this discriminatory and misguided policy in 1993, almost 14,000 service members have been fired because of their sexual orientation. The United States is well behind many of our allies in allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly in the military. Policies, like DADT, that create an atmosphere of fear and mistrust among colleagues serving side-by-side have no place in the military. I applaud the repeal of DADT and believe it is a significant step toward ensuring equality in our military and securing rights for members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community.

I urge my colleagues to reflect on the policies and fiscal implications included in this legislation. As the country struggles to pull itself out of one of the worst economic recessions in history, we must commit to our priorities here at home—protecting our environment, keeping people in their homes, and getting people back to work.

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SPEECH OF

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 27, 2010

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 5136) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2011 for military activities of the Department of Defense, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes:

Mr. STARK. Mr. Chair, I rise to oppose out of control war and defense spending. This bill (H.R. 5136) would authorize a record \$726 billion for defense. Congress refuses to find money to maintain COBRA premium assistance for jobless workers, but somehow we can afford yet another increase to our already bloated defense budget.

We should recognize that this legislation would fix a long-standing injustice by creating a path for the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." I was proud to vote for the Murphy Amendment and I look forward to the day when LGBT Americans enjoy equal rights in all facets of society, including marriage. Although I strongly support the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," I cannot vote for this legislation.

The waste in this bill is shameful. It includes \$361.6 million more than the Pentagon wants for a missile defense program that doesn't work, and \$485 million in funding for another engine for a fighter jet that already has a working engine. I offered an amendment that

would have cut the extra funding for missile defense, but it was not allowed to come to the floor for a vote. An amendment to strike money for a duplicative engine that the Pentagon doesn't want or need was also defeated.

Congress needs to get our priorities in order. We should be working to create jobs and assisting those impacted by the recession, not continue runaway defense spending. I urge all of my colleagues to oppose this wasteful bill.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. RON KLEIN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 28, 2010

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Madam Speaker, on Thursday, May 27, I was unavoidably detained.

Had I voted, I would have voted "yes" on rollcall No. 312.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2011

SPEECH OF

HON. EARL POMEROY

OF NORTH DAKOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 27, 2010

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 5136) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2011 for military activities of the Department of Defense, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes:

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Chair, I rise in support of H.R. 5136, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2011, though I have concerns about certain provisions that have been included in the bill.

While I strongly support many aspects of the bill, I am concerned about the inclusion of language to overturn the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. Earlier this year, the Secretary of Defense ordered a study of the issue of repealing "Don't Ask Don't Tell." He said that while he believes it should be repealed, he first wanted to gather input from the troops before moving forward with repeal. I agree with the approach of Secretary Gates. I also agree with our military's service chiefs, including Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton Schwartz, who said we should complete the Secretary's review before passing legislation to repeal "Don't Ask Don't Tell." I believe we should follow the lead of our military leaders. That means following the process we set up earlier this year to gather input from our troops and study the effect of repeal on our military forces. That is the best way to make sure our troops have their views heard, and that the right decision is made for the men and women in our armed forces.

While I voted against the amendment to end the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, I will be voting in favor of final passage of the 2011 NDAA. I believe that it is vitally important that Congress enact its yearly Defense Department authorization bill in a timely matter. This legislation helps to set military policy and any delay